

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 0263

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB GR

SUBJ: LABOR: INCREASED ACTIVITY

REF A. 75 ATHENS A-211, B. 75 ATHENS 7860

1. SUMMARY. WITH ELECTIONS AT THE PRIMARY UNION LEVEL RECENTLY COMPLETED, ATTENTION IN THE LABOR SECTOR IS NOW DIRECTED TOWARD THE ELECTIONS FOR THE GOVERNING OFFICIALS OF LABOR CENTERS AND FEDERATIONS. WHILE MOST OBSERVERS AGREE THAT THE LEFT HAS NOT MET WITH SIGNIFICANT SUCCESS AT THE UNION LEVEL ELECTIONS, APPREHENSION HAS BEEN STATED BY BOTH MINISTRY OF LABOR AND GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF GREEK WORKERS (GSEE) OFFICIALS OVER THE OUTCOME OF THE ATHENS LABOR CENTER ELECTIONS. THE CONGRESS OF THE ATHENS LABOR CENTER BEGINS JANUARY 12 WITH ELECTIONS TO BE HELD JANUARY 19-21. END SUMMARY.

2. WITH THE RETURN OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT TO GREECE FOLLOWING THE FALL OF THE MILITARY REGIME IN JULY, 1974, A PROGRAM WAS DEVELOPED TO HELD ELECTIONS THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE LABOR SECTOR. AS AN INTERIM MEASURE, TEMPORARY COURT-APPOINTED ADMINISTRATIONS
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WERE ESTABLISHED FOR ALL THE "SECOND AND THIRD LEVEL"

LABOR ORGANIZATIONS, I.E. FEDERATIONS, CONFEDERATIONS AND LABOR CENTERS. HOWEVER, THE LEADERSHIP OF THE NATION'S SOME 3,000 GRASS ROOTS UNIONS AT THE "PRIMARY LEVEL" WERE LEFT INTACT -- DUE IN LARGE PART TO THE COMPLEXITY OF THE TASK OF FINDING SO MANY QUALIFIED REPLACEMENTS IN A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME. THE NECESSITY OF HOLDING NEW ELECTIONS THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE LABOR SECTOR REFLECTED THE GENERAL DEMAND FOR A "CLEANSING" OR "DEJUNTIZATION" WHICH WOULD PARALLEL A SIMILAR PURGING IN OTHER SECTORS OF NATIONAL LIFE (REF A).

3. THE FINAL DEADLINE FOR THE COMPLETION OF ALL ELECTIONS AT THE UNION LEVEL WAS SET FOR DECEMBER 15, 1975. WITH VERY FEW EXCEPTIONS, MOST OF THE NATION'S UNIONS HAVE MET THAT DEADLINE. AS ONE ASPECT OF THOSE ELECTIONS, DELEGATES WERE SELECTED FROM ALL UNIONS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CONGRESSES OF LABOR CENTERS AND FEDERATIONS ("THE SECONDARY LEVEL ORGANIZATIONS") WHERE, IN TURN, ADMINISTRATIONS FOR THOSE GROUPS WOULD BE ELECTED.

4. BASICALLY FOUR GROUPPS COMPETED IN THE PRIMARY UNION ELECTIONS: (A) THE NON-ALIGNED TRADE UNION DEMOCRATIC COALITION (ASDIS), WHICH ESSENTIALLY REPRESENTS THE CURRENT APPOINTED LEADERSHIP OF THE GSEE AND WHICH PRESUMABLY REFLECTS GOG POLICY (REF B). (B) THE UNITED MOVEMENT OF FREE TRADE UNIONISTS (EKES), THE SO-CALLED "REFORMISTS" WHO ESSENTIALLY REPRESENT OFFICIALS WHO HELD MAJOR LEADERSHIP POSITIONS UNDER THE MILITARY REGIME. (C) THE PAN-HELLENIC ANTI-DICTATORIAL SYNDICALIST MOVEMENT OF WORKERS (PASKE), WHICH IS THE TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION RELATED TO PASOK, THE POLITICAL PARTY HEADED BY ANDREAS PAPANDREOU, AND (D) THE UNITED SYNDICALIST ANTI-DICTATORIAL MOVEMENT (ESAK) WHICH IS THE LABOR ARM OF THE GREEK COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE EXTERIOR.

5. DETAILED RESULTS OF THE ELECTIONS AT THE UNION LEVEL ARE NOT READILY AVAILABLE -- AND THOSE AVAILABLE

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ARE NOT SUSCEPTIBLE TO EASY ANALYSIS. ONE MAJOR PROBLEM IS THE FACT THAT CANDIDATES FOR UNION LEADERSHIP POSITIONS DID NOT NECESSARILY IDENTIFY THEMSELVES SPECIFICALLY WITH ONE OF THE FOUR FRONTS. HOWEVER, MOST QUALIFIED OBSERVERS WITH WHOM EMBOFFS HAVE SPOKEN HAVE INDICATED THAT, NATIONWIDE, THOSE CANDIDATES BELIEVED TO BE SUPPORTED BY THE LEFT (PASKE AND ESAK) WERE NOT SIGNIFICANTLY SUCCESSFUL.

IN SOME CASES, IT WAS REPORTED THAT PASOK AND ESAK COLLABORATED IN BACKING SELECTED CANDIDATES. OTHER REPORTS SUGGEST THAT IN CERTAIN INSTANCES, ASDIS COOPERATED WITH EKES. SOME INFORMED SPOKESMEN HAVE CITED THESE LATTER REPORTS AS REFLECTING GOVERNMENT AWARENESS OF THE WEAKNESSES OF THE ASDIS MOVEMENT AND THE CONCOMITANT NEED TO WORK TOGETHER WITH THE ELEMENTS OF EKES WHICH WERE NOT TOO FLAGRANTLY TARNISHED WITH PRO-JUNTA LABELS. IN FACT, SOME REFORMIST LEADERS HAVE ALLEGED THAT GOG LEADERS HAVE TAKEN RECENT INITIATIVES TO PERSUADE EKES NOT TO SUBMIT A SEPARATE SLATE FOR THE ATHENS LABOR CENTER ELECTIONS BUT RATHER TO SUPPORT THE ASDIS SLATE.

6. MANY OBSERVERS FEEL THAT THE ELECTIONS FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ATHENS LABOR CENTER WILL BE PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE. THE LEFT HAS PERFORMED TRADITIONALLY WELL IN THE URBAN AREA OF ATHENS AND LABOR MINISTRY OFFICIALS AS WELL AS GSEE LEADERS HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR CONCERN OVER THE OUTCOME OF THESE ELECTIONS. THEY HAVE COUCHED THEIR FEARS IN TERMS OF THE LEFT SECURING A SIGNIFICANT --THOUGH MINORITY --SHARE OF THE SEATS ON THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL, PERHAPS 30-35 PERCENT, BUT HAVE NOT YET ASSERTED ANY FEARS THAT THE LEFT WOULD GAIN A MAJORITY. PERHAPS IN A CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO MINIMIZE THE ABILITY OF THE LEFT TO MUSTER FULL STRENGTH FOR THE ATHENS LABOR CENTER CONTEST, IT WAS ANNOUNCED ONLY AS LATE AS DECEMBER 30 THAT THE LABOR CENTER CONGRESS WOULD BE HELD ON JANUARY 12 AND THAT THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING CANDIDACIES WOULD BE JANUARY 3. THIS INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT SET THE ELECTIONS FOR JANUARY 14-16 BUT THIS WAS LATER POSTPONED TO THE PERIOD JANUARY 19-21. CONFIDENTIAL

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7. THE LEFTIST LABOR ORGANIZATIONS PREDICTABLY PROTESTED THE "SHORT NOTICE" AND HAVE HELD A SERIES OF PROTEST MEETINGS AGAINST IT. THE LEFTIST GROUPINGS HAVE ALSO CONTINUED VOICING DEMANDS THAT A NUMBER OF LEFTIST ORIENTED LABOR ORGANIZATIONS THAT WERE PREVIOUSLY DISAFFILIATED FROM THE GSEE (BY ACTION OF THE GSEE) SHOULD BE REAFFILIATED IN TIME TO PERMIT THEIR PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS OF THOSE FEDERATIONS AND LABOR CENTERS UNDER THE GSEE AEGIS. THE MINISTER OF LABOR HAS TAKEN THE POSITION THAT IT IS NOT PROPER FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO INTERVENE ON THIS QUESTION SINCE IT RELATES TO MATTERS WITHIN THE PURVIEW OF THE GSEE ITSELF.

8. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, APPROXIMATELY 1200 DELEGATES REPRESENTING ABOUT 280 LOCAL UNIONS ARE CONVENING TODAY (JANUARY 12) TO ELECT A 27-MEMBER ADMINISTRATION. THESE DELEGATES WILL ALSO CHOOSE SOME 90 REPRESENTATIVES TO PARTICIPATE IN THE GENERAL CONGRESS OF THE GSEE (NO DATE YET SET FOR THAT CONGRESS). THE SITE OF THE LABOR CENTER CONGRESS HAS BEEN CHANGED FROM A THEATER IN THE DOWNTOWN ATHENS AREA TO A SPORTING ARENA MORE REMOVED FROM THE CENTER OF THE CITY. AS A PRECAUTION AGAINST POSSIBLE DEMONSTRATIONS OR OPEN AIR PROTESTS, THE POLICE DIRECTORATE OF ATHENS ANNOUNCED ON JANUARY 10 THAT OPEN AIR GATHERINGS WOULD BE PROHIBITED ON JAN 12. WHILE THE POLICE ANNOUNCEMENT SPOKE IN TERMS OF PREVENTING TRAFFIC CONGESTION AND RELATED DISTURBANCES TO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ACTIVITY OF THE AREA, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE POLICE MIGHT HAVE FORESEEN THE POSSIBILITY OF PROTEST DEMONSTRATIONS INITIATED ON THE PART OF GROUPS CRITICAL OF THE RATHER HASTILY ANNOUNCED CONGRESS. KUBISCH

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